



## DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

### News Release

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GOVERNOR

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**MR 2003 17**

For Immediate Release: September 22, 2003

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT RATE REMAINS BELOW NATIONAL AVERAGE**

**HONOLULU-** The State of Hawaii Department of Labor & Industrial Relations announced today that the statewide unemployment rate in August was 4.4 percent, a slight increase from 4.3 percent in July. In contrast, the national unemployment rate was 6.0 percent in August, declining from 6.3 percent in July. Since October 2002, Hawaii's unemployment rate has been at least one and one-half percentage points lower than the national unemployment rate.

In August, there were 581,000 employed and 26,900 unemployed, for a total statewide labor force of 607,800. Compared with September 2001, when the unemployment rate was 4.5 percent, the labor force has expanded by 3.5 percent (+20,400), while the number of unemployed has increased by 1.3 percent (+300).

"Looking back at where we were in terms of the job market in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack in 2001, Hawaii's ability to continue to grow and sustain the expansion of our labor force is a

testament to Hawaii's improving economy," said Nelson Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. Two years ago following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, Hawaii's unemployment rate rose to a high of 5.4% that November. At that time, Hawaii had a statewide labor force of 596,450, with 564,000 employed and 32,400 unemployed.

In another measure of employment, total non-agricultural jobs decreased by 1,200 in August over July. The public sector accounted for a considerable portion of the job decline. Within government, federal and state employment each went down by 300 jobs, with the contraction of state government mostly due to the end of summer student work at the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii. Local government declined by 200 jobs.

In the private sector, the vast majority of industries exhibited little change in workforce size. One area of growth was the restaurant industry, which added 300 jobs. At the same time, the conclusion of a private summer employment program resulted in the loss of 600 jobs in the social assistance sector.

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